



## Community Engagement Committee Meeting

November 13, 2018 – City of Coachella Corporate Yard, Coachella

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI)

### Meeting in Brief

- The first portion of the meeting focused on a joint discussion of the 10-Year Plan Committee and Engagement Committee to receive several SSMP project/planning updates and discuss opportunities to support community engagement. The group identified several ideas for improved engagement, including committees communicating specific project milestones and changes in project timelines, creating widely accessible outreach materials, and develop a strategy to help residents better understand and be prepared before participating in community workshops.
- Alianza presented preliminary results from its community engagement study, which provides recommendations to the State on how the SSMP can collaboratively raise awareness and integrate varying viewpoints.
- The Engagement Committee provided feedback on the draft workshop implementation study for the upcoming Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) community workshop in December. Members indicated a need for both community engagement and education to raise awareness and build capacity to provide meaningful input in Salton Sea planning. Engagement needs to be customized to each project (e.g., specific stakeholder lists, hold community workshops in the communities directly affected by the project, etc.). Members also suggested rephrasing discussion and questionnaires to ask about the community needs more broadly rather than focused on solely recreation. Projects should also clearly state how the design benefits the community public health.

[Click here](#) for meeting agenda and materials.

### Action Items

Who	What	Timeline
All	Send Josh and the Co-Chairs feedback on the "Promotion and Outreach" section in the strategy document	11/16
CBI	Email draft meeting summary to Committee for review	12/7
All	Email suggested edits to CBI on the draft meeting summary	12/14

### Joint 10-Year Plan Committee and Engagement Committee Discussion: Improving SSMP Community Outreach and Engagement

(Refer to the [10-Year Plan Committee meeting summary](#) for project updates).

The first portion of the meeting included a joint meeting of the 10-Year Plan Committee and Engagement Committee to receive several SSMP project/planning updates. These updates helped inform the later discussion on improving SSMP community outreach and engagement.

Previously, Engagement Committee members conveyed a need for more intentional and robust SSMP engagement. SSMP engagement should help SSMP implementation by advancing the 10-Year Plan implementation in a way that incorporates meaningful input. Engagement should enable the public to be informed, prepared for public meetings, and able to contribute to the planning and implementation process.

### **SSMP Engagement Study (Alianza Coachella Valley)**

Alianza (previously Building Healthy Communities) is a collaborative alliance bringing together partners to transform the socio-economic conditions of the Coachella Valley. Its EJ campaign includes Kounkey Design Initiative (KDI), California Institute for Rural Studies (CIRS), Audubon, Sierra Club, Coachella Unincorporated (CU), and Loma Linda University (LLU). Alianza partnered with these entities to conduct a community engagement study and provide recommendations to the State on how the SSMP can collaboratively raise awareness and integrate varying viewpoints. Alianza expects to complete the study report in late November/December.

KDI presented the preliminary results of the study to the 10-Year Plan Committee and Engagement Committee. The study involved meeting with three focus groups: the SSMP Science and Air Quality Committees, SSMP implementation bodies, and other on-the-ground organizations (e.g. Comité Cívico del Valle [CCV] and FIELD).

The engagement study report utilizes Alianza and partners' understanding of best practices for community engagement and offers recommendations based on real success examples. KDI indicated that community, infrastructure, should be equally valued and prioritized to achieve resiliency in the Salton Sea. However, community input has historically been left out. Citizen participation can vary widely (from non-participation, to just informing or consultation, to full citizen power of participation, delegated power, and citizen control). Full citizen power is ideal for the most meaningful engagement; however, the level of participation can and should be modified appropriately to the situation.

The study identified several engagement and implementation themes and recommendations. Engagement recommendations included creating a menu of engagement strategies that are cumulative and build off one another; ask what the community needs as a first step before proposing solutions; and articulate how the projects will help them address public health risks. Implementation recommendations included incorporating a multi-benefit infrastructure into the project design criteria to ensure the community is valued; set clear engagement budgets and scopes for the SSMP, plus sub-budgets and scopes for each SSMP project; and develop a clear process for community input to be realized within each project.

### **Discussion included the following:**

- Past SSMP outreach / engagement typically entailed mostly “informing” or “consultation,” but the State has begun to foster more “citizen power” participation. The Engagement Committee Co-Chairs emphasized its role to help consider and support opportunities for greater participation that may have been overlooked in the past.
- Develop simpler outreach materials that are accessible to a broader audience. This helps the community understand the complexity for SSMP implementation (e.g., technical complexity, politics, regulatory or permitting requirements and timelines, reasons for delays, etc.), thus enabling the community to better provide meaningful input.
- Be clear about the timelines for specific projects and milestones to feed into the Engagement Committee to identify when projects need community input to incorporate, develop, or

modify design. Give the Engagement Committee enough lead time to plan accordingly. Perhaps reserve time at the end of 10-Year Committee meetings and/or create short handouts to share updates (changes in project timelines / priorities, how community amenities were identified, etc.).

- In addition to Vivien Maisonneuve, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) State Liaison for the Engagement Committee, Esther Tracy is another DWR contact for the committee.

### **Public Comment**

A representative from the Coachella Valley Housing Coalition serving communities in the north shore emphasized the need for SSMP implementation address the health concerns related to the Salton Sea. She acknowledged implementation takes time and at high costs, but the permanent local residents need scientifically based results and be part of solving the health problems.

## **December Community Workshop on Species Conservation Habitat (SCH)**

(View the [draft implementation strategy for the SCH Community Workshop](#).)

The Engagement Committee has been working with the State to hold public workshops with a more dynamic, participatory open-style format and incorporate engagement recommendations (e.g., Alianza report). In December, the State will hold a public workshop on the SCH project that implements this new outreach strategy. The SCH workshop will help inform the approach, format, and outreach strategy for future community workshops.

The Engagement Committee reviewed the draft workshop implementation strategy, which included the workshop goals, agenda, questionnaire, communication materials, logistics, outreach and promotion, and implementation timeline. Josh Zipperman, Burke Rix and State consultant, explained the State is working with its consultants and other stakeholders to develop the workshop timeline, budgets, and staffing. They are also working on how the workshop input and notes will be compiled and utilized.

### **Discussion included the following:**

- The group re-emphasized the importance for the Engagement Committee to help the SSMP inform residents ahead of time so they can better understand the issues (constraints, considerations, and opportunities) before participating in workshops, as those meeting will not have enough time to vet all ideas.
- Learn from previous and existing work, such as the recommendations from the Alianza report and CCV's education program with DWR. Perhaps CCV can give an update on its activities and lessons learned regrading education and engagement at a future meeting.
- Host multiple locations that are directly affected by the project. Attendees encouraged holding the workshop in communities closer to the SCH project (e.g., Niland, Calipatria, Salton City, etc.).
- Consider attendees' availability. Which days (including weekends) and times work best?
- Create comprehensive stakeholder list for each project. For each project, distinguish who needs to be engaged (those directly affected) and those who should be informed (nearby communities).
- Possible locations for workshops include churches, schools, and community rooms.
- Use established networks to share information and conduct outreach for events. Engage local "educators," such as school boards, teachers, church leaders, etc.

- For the northern communities, focus on education of the Salton Sea. Although the SCH project is in the south, getting input from the north can help encourage more idea-sharing that may inform future project design and community engagement in the north.
- Consider other recreation opportunities besides water-based, especially if there are water quality and health concerns.
- Change wording for recreation to "other opportunities." Rephrase questions to be broader than solely recreation.
- Address priority of human health, and ensure people are aware of its priority.
- Be sure to manage expectations clearly at the workshops on how community input will be incorporated (i.e., this is a first round of workshops, there will be future workshops to report back).

Due to time constraints, Josh requested committee members send him and the Co-Chairs feedback on the "Promotion and Outreach" section in the strategy document by November 16<sup>th</sup>.

## Public Comments

A representative from Coachella Valley Housing Coalition indicated the water quality and health risks should be addressed before recreation opportunities and needed to have safe recreational uses of the Salton Sea water. Water treatment facilities are expensive, but the technology exists to provide safe water. Committee members and consultants shared some of the challenges and prospects for building a viable water treatment system for the Salton Sea.

The representative from Coachella Valley Housing Coalition encouraged utilizing the schools for the community workshops and structure meetings to be interesting learning events, in English and Spanish. She emphasized engaging the school board members to incorporate the Salton Sea into the curriculum.

A member of the public also encouraged educating students in science and the Salton Sea who can become the future guardians for their environment. She also recommended engaging the churches to convey how important it is to protect the environment and is aligned with their religious values.

## Meeting Attendees

Several community, Tribal, and agency stakeholders attended the meeting, in addition to the following Committee members and state staff liaisons.

### State of California

Bruce Wilcox, Assistant Secretary for the Salton Sea  
 Vivien Maisonneuve, DWR Liaison  
 Esther Tracy, DWR outreach and engagement contact  
 Arturo Delgado, CDFW Liaison

### Members Attending (some by phone)

Present			
	Javier	Aceves	Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
	Tom	Anderson	US Fish and Wildlife Services
✓	Patricia	Cooper	Riverside County
✓	Maria	Davydova	RWQCB

✓ ALT	Juan	De Lara	Salton Sea Action Committee (SSAC)
	Debi	Elton	Sea and Desert Interpretive Center
	Sarah	Friedman	Sierra Club California
✓	Samantha	Haynes	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
✓ ALT	Miguel	Hernandez	Comité Cívico del Valle (CCV)
✓ ALT	Sahara	Huazano	Building Healthy Communities Eastern Coachella Valley
✓	Genevieve	Johnson	Bureau of Reclamation Lower Colorado Region
✓	Emmanuel	Martinez	Imperial Irrigation District
✓	Melanie	McLees Cox	SSAC
	Pat	Meister	Sea and Desert Interpretive Center
	Kerry	Morrison	EcoMedia Compass
	Luis	Olmedo	Comité Cívico del Valle (CCV)
✓	Silvia	Paz	Building Healthy Communities Coachella Valley (Co-Chair)
✓	Esmeralda	Perez	Riverside County
✓	Marco	Perez	29 Palms Band of Morongo Indians
	Alex	Rodriguez	DCG Public Affairs
✓	Phil	Rosentrater	Salton Sea Authority
	Frank	Ruiz	Audubon California
	Altrena	Santillanes	Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
✓	Darren	Simon	SDCWA
	Dennis	Stephen	California State Parks
✓ ALT	Tom	Sephton	EcoMedia Compass
✓	Rebecca	Terrazas-Baxter	County of Imperial (Co-Chair)
✓	Jennifer	Toy	Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI)

### State Consultant

Josh Zipperman, Senior Associate, Burke Rix Communications

### Facilitation Support

Stephanie Horii, Associate, CBI